

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1) (Currently Amended) A unit (1) for applying opening devices (2) to packages (3) of pourable food products having a rupturable portion (5), the unit (1) comprising:

first conveying means (20) for feeding said packages (3) successively along a first path (P1); and

gripping means (26) for receiving said opening devices (2) at a pickup station (11), and which move cyclically between said pickup station (11) and an application station (12) interfacing with said first path (P1) and where the opening devices (2) are applied to respective said packages (3);

~~characterized in that the~~ wherein a trajectory of said gripping means (26) from said application station (12) to said pickup station (11) is distinct from said first path (P1), and in that the unit (1) also comprises pressure means (31) generating a contact pressure between said packages (3) and said opening devices (2) as of said application station (12) and along at least a portion (X) of said first path (P1).

2) (Currently Amended) A unit as claimed in Claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein said pressure means (31) comprise a number of pressure members (33), which act on respective said opening devices (2) to press them onto respective

said packages (3) in a direction (E) crosswise to the a feed plane of the packages (3) along said first path (P1); and second conveying means (32) for feeding said pressure means (33) along a second path (P4) interfacing with said first path (P1) as of said application station (12) and along said portion (X) of the first path.

3) (Currently Amended) A unit as claimed in Claim 2, ~~characterized in~~ that wherein each said pressure member (33) comprises a support (41) integral with said second conveying means (32); and an actuating member (42) fitted to said support (41) to move along an axis (E) perpendicular to the feed plane of said packages (3) along said first path (P1), and which is movable between a work position, in which it acts on a relative said opening device (2) to keep it pressed on the relative said package (3), and a rest position, in which it is detached from said opening devices (2).

4) (Currently Amended) A unit as claimed in Claim 3, ~~characterized in~~ that wherein said gripping means (26) define at least one seat (30) for retaining a relative said opening device (2), and which is open on both sides in a direction parallel to said axis (E) of movement of each said actuating member (42), and on the trailing side in the ~~travelling~~ traveling direction of the gripping means (26) from said application station (12) to said pickup station (11).

5) (Currently Amended) A unit as claimed in claim 3 ~~or 4~~, ~~characterized in~~ that wherein said pressure means (31) comprise control means (~~57, 58, 67, 72, 76~~)

for moving said actuating members (42) into said work position along said portion (X) of said first path (P1), and into said rest position along the rest of said second path (P4).

6) (Currently Amended) A unit as claimed in Claim 5, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein, for each said pressure member (33), said control means comprise first elastic means (57) for loading the relative said actuating member (42) into said work position; and retaining means (58) fitted to the relative said support (41) to move between a disabling position retaining said actuating member (42) in said rest position in opposition to said first elastic means (57), and an enabling position allowing said actuating member (42) to move into said work position.

7) (Currently Amended) A unit as claimed In Claim 6, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein said support (41) of each said pressure member (33) comprises a hollow body (50) having an open end portion (51) facing said packages (3), and housing the relative said actuating member (42) and said first elastic means (57); said retaining means of each said pressure member (33) comprising a movable member (58) fitted to the relative said support (41) to move in a direction (F) crosswise to said axis (E) of movement of the relative said actuating member (42), and which interferes with said open end portion (51) of the relative said hollow body (50) in said disabling position to prevent the actuating member (42) from being moved into the work position by said first elastic means (57).

8) (Currently Amended) A unit as claimed in Claim 7, ~~characterized in that wherein~~ each said movable member (58) is loaded by second elastic means (64) into said disabling position; and in that said control means comprise interacting means (57) located at said application station (42) and acting on each said movable member (58), in opposition to the relative said second elastic means (64) and as the relative said pressure member (33) travels along said portion (X) of said first path (P1), so as to move the movable member (58) into said enabling position.

9) (Currently Amended) A unit as claimed in ~~any one of Claims 5 to 8~~ Claim 5, ~~characterized by~~ comprising fixed guide means (76) located at an end portion of said portion (X) of said first path (P1), and interacting with an actuating portion (72) of each said actuating member (42) to restore the actuating member (42) to said rest position in opposition to said first elastic means (57).

10) (Currently Amended) A unit as claimed in ~~any one of Claims 5 to 9~~ Claim 5, ~~characterized by~~ comprising damping means (75) located at said application station (42) and interacting with each said actuating member (42) being moved into said work position by said first elastic means (57), to control the impact of the actuating member (42) on the relative said opening device (2).

11) (Currently Amended) A unit as claimed in Claim 10, ~~characterized in that wherein~~ said damping means (75) comprise a rocker arm (77) hinged at an intermediate point about an axis (C) crosswise to the axis (E) of movement of each

said actuating member (42), and having a first end portion (78) located at said application station (12) and along the trajectory of a portion (72) of the actuating member (42), and a second end portion (79) loaded by a damper (80).

12. (New) A unit as claimed in claim 4, wherein said pressure means comprise control means for moving said actuating members into said work position along said portion of said first path, and into said rest position along the rest of said second path.

13. (New) A unit as claimed in Claim 6, comprising fixed guide means located at an end portion of said portion of said first path, and interacting with an actuating portion of each said actuating member to restore the actuating member to said rest position in opposition to said first elastic means.

14. (New) A unit as claimed in Claim 7, comprising fixed guide means located at an end portion of said portion of said first path, and interacting with an actuating portion of each said actuating member to restore the actuating member to said rest position in opposition to said first elastic means.

15. (New) A unit as claimed in Claim 8, comprising fixed guide means located at an end portion of said portion of said first path, and interacting with an actuating portion of each said actuating member to restore the actuating member to said rest position in opposition to said first elastic means.

16. (New) A unit as claimed in Claim 6, comprising damping means located at said application station and interacting with each said actuating member being moved into said work position by said first elastic means, to control the impact of the actuating member on the relative said opening device.

17. (New) A unit as claimed in Claim 7, comprising damping means located at said application station and interacting with each said actuating member being moved into said work position by said first elastic means, to control the impact of the actuating member on the relative said opening device.

18. (New) A unit as claimed in Claim 8, comprising damping means located at said application station and interacting with each said actuating member being moved into said work position by said first elastic means, to control the impact of the actuating member on the relative said opening device.

19. (New) A unit as claimed in Claim 9, comprising damping means located at said application station and interacting with each said actuating member being moved into said work position by said first elastic means, to control the impact of the actuating member on the relative said opening device.